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Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached two sheets of drawings include changes to Figs. 1 and 25. These two sheets, which include Figs. 1 and 2 and Figs. 25-27 respectively, replace the original sheets including Figs. 1 and 2 and Figs. 25-27 respectively. In Fig. 1, the intersection of the posts and the beams has been corrected to correspond with original Figs. 25-27, and the reference numeral 40 has been corrected to show numeral 50. In Fig. 25, the leader line for the reference numeral 42 has been added.

Attachment: Two (2) Replacement Sheets

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Remarks/Arguments:

Reconsideration of the application as amended is requested.

Applicants request a one month extension of time to respond to the outstanding Office action, and a separate petition to this effect is enclosed.

The Examiner's additional remarks have been received and carefully considered. Applicants note that the Examiner has withdrawn the previously indicated allowability of claims 65-79, 77, 80, 81 and 88 in view of a more careful review of the previously cited Dwilgies Patent 5,277,512, and that the latest Office action is non-final. Pending claims 65-75, 77, 80, 81 and 88 have been canceled without prejudice, claims 76, 79, 82, 87, 89 and 94 have been amended, and new claims 100-145 have been added.

Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's comment that claims 30-34 and 94-99 are allowed, and that claims 70-76, 78, 79, 82-87 and 89 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 76, 79, 82 and 89 have been rewritten in independent form, and are therefore believed to be in condition for immediate allowance, along with claims 83-87 which depend therefrom.

Fig. 1 has been amended to correct the post and beam interface to conform with original Figs. 25-27, and change erroneously identified reference numeral 40 to reference numeral 50. Fig. 25 has been amended to add a leader line to reference numeral 42, which was omitted in the original drawings. The specification has been amended at pages 8 and 13 to

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provide precise antecedent basis for the new claims submitted herewith. Each of the requested amendments to the drawings and specification are believed to be fully supported by the original application as filed, and do not present any new matter.

The Examiner objected to claims 69, 87 and 94 due to informalities relating to antecedent basis. Claim 69 has been canceled, such that the objection is now moot. Claim 87 has been amended to depend from claim 86 so as to provide proper antecedent basis for the various claim elements. Claim 94 has been amended to change "said overhead beam" to --said horizontal beam-- to conform with the other recitations of this claim element in the claim.

The Examiner rejected prior claims 65-69 and 77 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being fully anticipated by the Dwillies Patent 5,277,512. The Examiner also rejected prior claims 80, 81 and 88 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being fully anticipated by the Dwillies reference. While Applicants believe that the subject rejections of the prior claims are not well taken, since these claims have now been canceled, the issue is moot. All previously presented claims are now believed to be in condition for immediate allowance.

With respect to new claim 100, the same recites a post and beam furniture system for partitioning open office spaces and the like, comprising a plurality of vertical posts having lower ends thereof configured to be abuttingly supported on a floor surface of the open office space, and being arranged in a laterally spaced apart fashion. At least one of the posts has a cruciform plan shape defined in part by a central portion, and four, substantially identical

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flanges extending outwardly from the central portion in a mutually perpendicular relationship. Each of the flanges has a generally flat end face with a single vertical slot extending centrally therealong, and a predetermined width measured between opposite sidewalls of the flanges. The furniture system recited in new claim 100 also includes a plurality of horizontal beams having opposite ends configured for operably connection with the posts in a predetermined pattern to divide the open office space into a plurality of individual workstations. At least one of the beams has a generally rectangular shape defined in part by opposite sidewalls spaced apart a predetermined width which is generally commensurate with the predetermined width of the flanges on the one post, such that the one beam mates with any one of the flanges along the length thereof in a flush relationship. The post and beam furniture system set forth in new claim 100 also includes at least one post-to-beam connector having a first portion operably connected with one end of the beam, and second portion detachably retained in the slot in one of the flanges on the post for supporting the beam at a variety of different orientations and elevations along the one post.

The Dwillies Patent 5,277,512 discloses a joint for detachable connection of structural members for applications such as temporary display systems, modular kitchen cabinets, shelving units and the like. The illustrated temporary displays are stated to be used for advertising, displaying information at conferences and the like, and are ideally light in weight, inexpensive and easy to assemble into a wide variety of different configurations. Fig. 1 shows

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a temporary display stand comprising a framework of horizontal members 10 and vertical members 12. Panels 20 are fitted into some of the rectangular openings in the framework. Panels 20 are slightly wider than the distance between vertical members 12, so that the edges of panels 20 fit inside slots in vertical members 12. Panels 20 are thereby held within the framework. The specification also indicates that horizontal members 10 may also have longitudinal slots 22 to receive the upper and lower edges of panels 20, so that panels 20 are firmly retained in and stabilize the framework. The horizontal members 10 have resilient T-shaped tongues that mate with T-shaped slots on the vertical members 12. Rotation of the tongue within the slot causes a wedging action which stretches the tongue to draw the tongue firmly into the slot.

Fig. 2 of the Dwillies '512 patent shows the connection of one horizontal member 11 to an associated vertical member 13. Horizontal member 11 has projecting tongue 14 which is lockingly engaged with longitudinal slot 16 in the face 18 of vertical member 13. Horizontal member 11 is held in place at right angles to vertical member 13 by frictional engagement between the end 20 of horizontal member 11 and the face 18 of vertical member 13 and between tongue 14 and the inside surface of slot 16. More specifically, the tongue is engaged in the slot by rotating it about its axis, causing the end of the tongue to be drawn into the slot by wedging action between the tongue and the sloped inner surfaces of the slot.

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While the Dwillies patent does disclose a T-slot and a mating T-fastener joint for temporary displays and other similar applications, it does not contemplate the post and beam furniture system set forth in new claim 100. More specifically, the vertical members 12 of the Dwillies temporary display stand do not have a cruciform plan shape defined in part by a central portion, and four, substantially identical flanges extending outwardly from the central portion in a mutually perpendicular relationship. The cruciform plan shape of Applicants' posts creates triangular spaces between the adjacent flanges in which furniture accessories, such as wire managers and the like, can be routed. The flush mating relationship between the opposite sides of the beams and the opposite sides of the post flanges to which it is connected creates a unique framed, monolithic appearance, with smooth transition lines between the posts and the beam flanges. These features of the post and beam furniture system set forth in new claim 100 are not disclosed or rendered obvious by the Dwillies '512 patent.

New claim 101, which depends directly from claim 100 discussed above, and includes a plurality of partition accessories configured to equip the furniture system. The partition accessories have mounts shaped to be detachably retained in the slots on the flanges of the posts to support the partition accessories at a variety of different orientations and elevations along the posts. Clearly, the Dwillies '512 patent does not teach or suggest use of partition accessories or the ability to mount the same in post slots at a variety of different orientations and elevations.

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New claim 102, which depends from claim 101 discussed above, further recites a slot extending along the one beam which is substantially similar to the slots on the flanges of the one post to facilitate mounting the partition accessories on both the post and the beam at a variety of different locations in the workstations. The Dwillies '512 patent does not teach or suggest this arrangement.

New claim 103, which depends from claim 102 discussed above, further recites a slot in the uppermost face of the beam into which a portion of the post-to-beam connector is mounted to facilitate attachment of the beam to the post. While the Dwillies horizontal members 10 may be equipped with a longitudinal slot 22, the Dwillies slot is designed to receive either the upper or lower edge of one of the panels 20, and does not cooperate or interact with the tongue 14 to attach the horizontal member 10 to the vertical member 12. Rather, the tongue 14 of Dwillies is mounted in a central portion of the end of the horizontal member 11.

New claims 104-122 depend directly or indirectly from claims 100-103 discussed above, and add additional features and structure thereto, which are not taught or suggested by the Dwillies '512 patent.

Applicants have reviewed the remaining references of record, and believe that they do not teach or suggest those unique features discussed above as missing in the Dwillies '512 patent.

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New claim 134 is similar to new claim 100 discussed above, except that it appears in Jepson format, and claims a plurality of the posts, beams and beam-to-post connectors. Applicants believe that new claim 134, along with claims 135-129, which depend therefrom, are also patentable over the references of record for those reasons set forth above.

New claim 123, is also similar to new claim 100 discuss above, except that it is directed to a post and beam furniture which includes at least one post having a Y-shaped plan configuration defined in part by a central portion, and three, substantially identical flanges extending outwardly from the central portion in a generally 120 degree mutual relationship. Applicants assert that neither the Dwillies '512 patent, nor any of the other references of record, teach or suggest the post and beam furniture system set forth in new claim 123, or new claims 124-133, which depend therefrom.

New claim 140 is similar to new claim 123 discussed above, except that it appears in Jepson format and recites a plurality of the Y-shaped posts, horizontal beams, and post-to-beam connectors. Applicants assert that new claim 140, along with new claims 141-145 which depend therefrom, are patentable over the references of record for those reasons already of record.

Applicants submit that all previously presented claims are now in condition for immediate allowance, and all new claims submitted therewith are patentable over the cited references for those reasons already of record. It is therefore respectfully submitted that


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claims 76, 78, 79, 82-87 and 89, as well as new claims 100-145, should be allowed, along with allowed claims 30-34 and 94-99. A notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence, and all identified enclosures and attachments are being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450, on 9/26/05.


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CSC/jkrp
Enclosures